

Helena JSEC Meeting Minutes

April 18, 2012

Members Present:

Alan Thompson
Brandon Steinagel
Cathy Wood
Chris Beebe
Penny Fassett
Tina Whitaker
Tom Antonick
Carol Rule
Sandy Hamlin

U of M Helena, College of Technology
Enterprise Holdings
Student Assistance Foundation
Shodair Children's Hospital
American Chemet Corporation
lia Sophia
Office of Public Instruction
Helena Job Service
Helena Job Service

Introductions: Tina requested introductions so that Brandon Steinagel, from Enterprise Holdings, would have the opportunity to meet everyone. Welcome.

March Minutes: Tom motioned to approve the minutes for March and Alan made a second. Minutes were approved as written.

Treasurer Report: Penny reported the JSEC checking account has \$6,256.93. We just received a check for \$242.00, proceeds from the last Business over Breakfast workshop, and Penny just wrote checks for \$75.00 and \$25.00.

WIA (Job Service Spotlight): Carol Rule, Supervisor at Helena Job Service, gave a presentation on the WIA (Workforce Investment Act) Programs. Programs (as Job Service calls it) staff are generally case managers, whereas the Line Staff does labor exchange, job search assistance, and posts jobs for employers. The Programs Unit helps people with barriers to employment, and their job is to try to eliminate those barriers. WIA is simply the name of the law that appropriates dollars for federal employment training programs. It replaced a program called JTPA. Federally funded training programs have been in place for a long time. Job Service operates two of these programs. One is the Adult Program, applicants must be over 18, and is income eligibility based. There are several different income criteria. If they are on public assistance, eligibility is automatic. Veterans also get priority of service. We can also look to see if they are below a self-sufficient wage. The government considers that to be \$7.92 per hour, and we look at their last 6 months income. There are other criteria, but we really have to look at people on an individualized basis for the Adult Program.

The other program is the Dislocated Worker Program, which is for people laid off from work through no fault of their own. They have to have been laid off and eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits, or have received them since that layoff.

Neither of these programs are what we call entitlement programs. So even if the person meets eligibility, it doesn't mean that we will enroll them. In both programs, we have more people than money. When people apply, they meet with a case manager to review the information they have given us and talk about their individual circumstances. The enrollment is decided on a team basis. The team is myself and the 3 case managers that work in the Program. The case manager that initially meets with the person acts as their advocate, and the others generally act as devil's advocate and try to identify barriers. What we look for are people that are likely to return to permanent, full-time work and the viability of their training and/or employment plan. We'll look at whether it is a growing occupation in our local labor market area.

In these two programs, we can offer supportive services. Maybe they just need some more in-depth career counseling, or they might need gas money to look for work, car repair, dental work or child care. Depending on the budget, the program can help with those kinds of things under 'intensive services'. If they still cannot find employment under 'intensive services', they move up to 'training services'. In that case, we can pay a portion of the tuition, books, and sometimes other expenses; anything that helps them complete their employment plan. Carol asked if there were any questions.

Several questions were posed:

Q: What would be a typical case load for staff?

A: In normal years, it has been about 28 to 34 total participants. However, now it is around 72 to 78 in the Dislocated Worker Program. The Adult Program is still running around 38.

Q: How often does the participant have to come in?

A: Maybe once a month unless they have a need.

Q: How long can they be in the program?

A: Ideally, the intent is to get them back into the workforce as soon as possible. However, we do have people that take 4 year training programs. We prefer a quicker turn around.

Q: What is the success rate?

A: Traditionally the success rate was in the 95%, we have done real well with performance. However, we have new criteria for performance. Was their exit to employment, and were they employed the first and third quarter after exit? Now we have what they call 'universal services', so we really don't know when they are done, because if they use our database or any of our services at Job Service, they are still considered enrolled. We can no longer gauge the exit date or determine performance as an individual office, only statewide. Statewide it did dip a little the past couple of years, but that has been because there have been fewer jobs. Retention is sometimes difficult too.

Q: Does Programs still use the CTI (Career Training Institute) for training?

A: We use to send clients to a short-term clerical course at CTI, but they are no longer offering that. We now prefer to send them to UM Helena for the 1 year certificate or the 2 year degree in office technology. We feel this offers the best placement opportunity.

One of the big advantages to Programs is we can certify their training. Normally you are not eligible to draw (UI) Unemployment Insurance because you are not available to work while going to school. Programs can certify the training so they can still draw UI and attend training. People can petition for that themselves through UI if they are not in programs, but it can waylay their benefits for weeks.

We've served a lot of people changing careers, like when ASARCO closed down. Most of them had worked in the smelter for years and there were no other smelter jobs to go to, so they had to do a lot of career research and think about how they were going to take this training benefit and use it to their best advantage. We had some that became nurses, others surveyors, some real changes. It opened the door for them, but they were feeling kind of insecure about making this huge career change. We had a year follow up after their exit where they were still eligible for supportive services from us, or anything we could do to help them retain that job. Sometimes people in a big career change just need one contact they can talk to and say, this is what's going on. Oftentimes with large groups, they go through this with their coworkers which helps ease the transition.

Carol continued, one of the best training programs is the OJT (on-the-job training). Some people choose traditional training, and they go see Alan at UM Helena, which we highly recommend. They may choose short-term vocational training, like truck driver training. Another option is OJT, which is hire first and train later principle, and WIA Programs will supplement the wage while they are training. It can be as long as 6 months and usually up to 50% of the wages would be reimbursed by us. We do have money available right now to do OJT and supplement the wages. Penny said she would

assume OJTs have a certain cap. Carol stated occasionally we offer NEG's (National Emergency Grants) where we get special funding for a targeted group. For example, we have a timber NEG for those affected by the timber industry. We had an NEG for Montana Tunnels workers years ago. Those do usually have a cap on the wages, but the Dislocated Worker Program or Adult Program neither have a cap on the wages, but there is a cap on the length of time. Time is determined by a national rating for what it takes to train in that occupation. We try to match up the occupation with the national code, and that is how the training time is determined.

Carol encouraged anyone who might have an opening they need to hire for to consider an OJT, and the Programs staff at Job Service would be happy to send someone their way. She clarified that the employer actually hires the person first. You check out their application, and interview them just like you would anybody else, and you are not obligated to keep them if they don't work out. Penny asked if it would be considered discrimination if the employer gave WIA Program's participants a preference. Within State Government you can give them preference because it is federal training dollars, but Carol wasn't sure about the private sector and will check on that. Sometimes Programs can also do customized training if you have a worker that may be struggling.

WIA works a lot with other community agencies, partnering with them, combining funding streams, and doing referrals. We do whatever we can to put the whole package together. The Programs Unit is really where you see the no wrong door - one stop approach. Participants talk to one case manager, and we may call Vo Rehab for you, we may call Office of Public Assistance, or LEAP. We'll help participants fill out applications and get them going with intensive services.

Carol concluded by saying they never know how much money the WIA Programs are going to have, but the Department is always applying for grants that help the workforce. We can have lots of happy endings.

Scholarship Presentation: Sandy passed around a thank-you card from our scholarship winner (Morgan). We will be dedicating the entire May JSEC meeting to a reception for her. Deb will be arranging for the TV, radio and other media for the event. Cake and punch will be served, and Morgan will probably bring some of her family members. Tom will not be here to make the presentation, so Alan and Cathy will be in charge of that. Tom noted that there is a little summary on the Fred Unmack application that they can follow, and Sandy get some talking points together too. Basically the presentation will consists of introductions and a little about the winner.

Brandon asked how the Mike Bullock Scholarship was advertised and how students apply. The Scholarship is online, and the schools are contacted electronically. Sandy mentioned that next year she plans to touch base with the counselors. Last month, Robert stated that a lot of times the students that have an adversity don't think they qualify for anything. The counselors might have to encourage them to apply.

Brandon also wanted to know how much the scholarship was and where the money came from. Sandy answered that most of our funds come from Jim Nys' Workshops (Business over Breakfast). Dave arranges the workshops held here at the Job Service, and Jim donates half of the proceeds to JSEC. As new treasurer, Penny wasn't sure how much we usually got from the workshops. Sandy said attendance usually averaged between 10-15 people, and they pay \$40.00 each to attend. She added JSEC is pretty fortunate we don't have to go out and do bake sales and such to raise money. Along those lines, Dave thought it would be nice if the JSEC Members had a chance to contact Jim this week. Westaff is 25 years old in Helena this year. So if we could e-mail him, drop him a note, or go see him, that would be great. Penny also said that Dave wanted to provide a bouquet of flowers

for Jim and Westaff, to which everyone concurred. Twenty-five dollars was designated for that.

Brandon asked if we were aware of the Enterprise Foundation, part of Enterprise Holdings. He stated that Enterprise wants to be involved both physically and financially in their communities. The reason Enterprise is a huge company, is because of what everyone in the community has done for them. So one of the ways that Enterprise gives back is through a foundation where 501©3 organizations can apply for grants. The grant committee meets 3 times a year to evaluate applications for the grants. Brandon says because JSEC is a 501©3 and he is involved with JSEC, there is a possibility that we could request a grant from the foundation to help fund the scholarship and other JSEC Committee projects. The first request is usually never under \$1,000.00. Brandon could request the grant and explain what JSEC does for the community. If we have a specific purpose, that helps as well. Tina asked Brandon about the window of time to apply. He thinks the next one is October, but will check. Brandon and his Vice President review applications before sending them to the foundation. What would help him is to know, in addition to the scholarship, other things we do for organizations or people in the community. Tina mentioned that funds are also provided for the breakfast recognition and plaques for the small and large employer of year awards. We have donated money to the Angel Fund, and Chris added that JSEC pays for a National SHRM Membership for Dave. Sandy will get Brandon our 'Yearly Review' and any other documents he may need.

Discussion ensued on what we might do if we did get the grant, such as using the money to increase the scholarships amount. Since the second-year scholarship was put in place because students usually get the bulk of their scholarships the first year, Penny suggested continuing more years as an additional incentive.

Sandy informed us the Mike Bullock Scholarship winner was not selected again for the Fred Unmack Scholarship. This is MSEC's (Montana State Employers Council) Scholarship. She will be talking with the new MSEC Coordinator, Pam Watson, about how their winner is selected. This year's winner was from Great Falls. Tom said our winner overcame challenges that most of the students don't ever face, and he chose to make that fact the strength on the Fred Unmack application. Tina believes that Anna was on the MSEC Scholarship Committee this year, and we may want to talk to her too. Sandy will touch base with Anna and Pam

Tina, Carolyn, Anna and Sandy attended the MSEC Meeting in Missoula last week. Sandy went over the winners for the different categories: JSEC Chair, Job Service Manager, JSEC Committee, JSEC Coordinator, and Spark Plug Awards. One of MSEC's requests is that next year we get in more nominations from the different local JSECs. Tom said he has never quite grasped what MSEC actually is and does. Sandy stated that was a big discussion at the meeting. Nobody seemed to know MSEC's purpose. It is our umbrella agency at the State level. The MSEC Coordinator, Pam, has been speaking to different JSECs about MSEC's purpose. Sandy will try to get her to come and talk to us next fall. Tina added that every JSEC Chair is automatically a board member on the MSEC. The chairs can designate someone else. Last year they had a facilitator at their meetings to help in scrubbing MSEC down and making it relevant at the MSEC level, to the JSEC, down to the Workforce Centers, and to the community. There are 4 sub-committees that have come out of those meetings. Tina is on the Partnership Committee. There are also committees on Training Resources, Information and Communication, and Business Recognition. The Partnership Committee is looking at things like partnering with Chambers, SHRM and other organizations. Tina said it is about relevancy, and we will be seeing more information from MSEC. As far as JSEC, Tina believes MSEC sees us as the voice of what the Job Service has to offer the community and employers.

Hidden Agenda: Tom has a Governor's Advisory Task Force that has been scheduled from 1-4 every Wednesday, so he will have a conflict for future JSEC Meetings. The Task Force has huge implications for Montana State Government. Sandy advised that JSEC is not locked into the 3:30 time slot if there is better time for everyone.

Tina thought JSEC might consider participating in the upcoming Chamber event at the Airport. Chris said it is set up like a trade show, and the tables are about \$300.00 each. Sandy noted that Helena Job Service is a member of the Helena Chamber of Commerce and staff does attend there 'Business after Hours' periodically. Tom added that the event was a good place to find groups of employers. From his experience, Job Service's Business Service Unit is a great asset to small employers. Penny agreed that the HR support to employers that Job Service offers was under the radar for a long time.

Meeting adjourned.